



People of Cocodrilos

a photo essay by Carlos E. Escalona (Kako)



People of Cocodrilos

"People of Cocodrilos" is a photographic series about a small village doomed to disappear. Ten environmental portraits made on 2013, during the production of the documentary movie "Hombres de Cocodrilos" (director Liván Magdaleno, 2013). Human faces calling for attention about the consequences of the hasty economic decisions that underestimate the impact in the lives of the people involved.

In 2002, East Zapata Swamp been declared as a Protected Natural Area. The coalmakers -descendants of generations of coalmakers- suddenly lost their jobs. There used to live in the village more than 400 residents, today, they sum no more than 80. Authorities offered new homes in other villages, asuming everyone wants to live in a more developed place, but only young people left. Elders felt themselves unprepared to start a new live in a different place, and still remain in "Cocodrilos" practicing basic activities. These can be the last faces of a three-hundred-year-old community.

"Cocodrilos" represents not only a village inside Zapata Swamp. Cuba, a country that lost 2/3 of the historic sugar production in 2002, experiments somehow the same with the population, regardless of the current process of economic reforms. An important portion of young people migrate to other places in the island or even leave the country, because the lack of options for personal development. In 2020 1/6 of cubans will be older than 60. The series, even more symbolic than conceptual is a tribute to the dignity of those who -for one reason or another- refuse to leave their homeland.



People of Cocodrilos



Rigoberto Campos
the seed harvester



Roberto Dita
the delegate for community guard



Luis Amador
the retired coalmaker



Raúl
the power plant operator



Ramiro
the storyteller



Julito
the fisherman



Bolo
the animal breeder



Tania
the housewife



Tito
the cowboy



José Carlos
the future

The idea of carrying out the project "Gente de Cocodrilos" ("People of Cocodrilos") is based on the experiences gained during the filming of the documentary movie "Hombres de Cocodrilos" (director Liván Magdaleno, 2013). The purpose is to show as graphic evidence the difficult living conditions of that community in the Ciénaga de Zapata (Zapata Swamp). The proposal consists of a series of portraits of type-characters who, although they show on the distinctiveness of the environment, go beyond that condition to become representations of the human element. Despite the documentary substrate, the pieces have a high conceptual and symbolical content, verifiable in their different reading levels.

Catalog of "Zona Franca", Collateral exhibitions at XII Biennial of Havana

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Photographer, documentarian, professor.

Bachelor in Cinematography at Arts University of Havana (ISA) since 2008. Contributes to "The Stand Global", "Progreso Semanal", "OnCuba" and Radio Nederland Wereldomroep.

1st place in Landscape in "Naturaleza Digital 2014" nature photography contest.

Exhibitor at 12th Biennial of Havana with "Gente de Cocodrilos" photographic series ("People of Cocodrilos").

Director of Photography in documentary movies "She Works" (2006), "South of Matahambre" (2008) y "People of Cocodrilos" (2013).

From 2012 has taught the workshop "Photojournalism and Social Documentary" at ISA, University of Havana (UH) and American University of Washington D.C (AU). Lecturer in photojournalism for AU, Nebraska-Lincoln University, New Jersey College, UH, ISA, School of Creative Photography of Havana.